

Town of Los Gatos
Planning Department
110 E. Main St
Los Gatos, CA 95030

September 16, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

Re: Home Rebuild at 221 Highland Ter

We, Brandye and Jordan Sweetnam, are proposing to rebuild our home, located at 221 Highland Terrace. Both of us are employed locally in the technology sector - Brandye at Netflix and Jordan at eBay - in senior leadership roles. We have been residents of Santa Clara County for almost 13 years, and purchased this home in early 2018. Our two school-aged children are enrolled at Van Meter Elementary and Fisher Middle School, respectively. We love living in Los Gatos and plan to remain involved members of the community for years to come as we continue to raise our children. We are also active in the Civic Center Hillside Network which is a community group focused on fire prevention, maintenance and safety of the Los Gatos Hillside neighborhood.

We first fell in love with the location and the privacy afforded by the home's unique hillside location set upon 3 acres. We purchased the home with an intent to renovate it to modernize it and improve the structural stability. Unfortunately, after consulting several experts, including architects, general contractors and structural engineers, it became clear to us that simply renovating the home would not be possible. In fact, the structural engineer recommended the home be demolished given its significant structural and seismic deficiencies. Additionally, our home has a very old and poorly-placed septic system (5' from the kitchen) which has the potential to create additional environmental impacts.

Our plan is to rebuild a slightly larger home, leveraging much of the existing footprint but with a more efficient layout. The new home design is contemporary in style, yet modern in construction, with an intention to utilize the latest in fire-safe and environmentally-conscious building materials. We have designed the house to seamlessly blend into the topography of the hillside, matching the roof slope to that of the hillside, while still taking advantage of the light and privacy our location provides. Our home is quite secluded given it is at the end of a private road, behind a ridgeline and within a canyon. It is only visible to a handful of neighbors and cannot be seen from any of the viewing platforms in Los Gatos. This seclusion and privacy, along with the oak-filled lot, is one of the reasons we love it so much - and are intent on keeping the same level of privacy and forestation with our new build.

In terms of the home's construction, our plan has the home situated slightly further back on the lot in order to accommodate a proper and full fire truck turnaround. To accommodate this shifted footprint, we will only need to remove one pepper tree on the back side of the property. The arborist has indicated some trees will need to be removed on the non-building area of the property as they are damaged, dead or dying. These numbers are small given the plethora of trees on the property, and the overall essence of the forest will remain, and we will replant trees where recommended by the arborist. The canopy of the existing oak trees on the rest of the property will be maintained as much as possible, as we are committed to maintaining not only the beauty of the hillside, but also the privacy afforded to all the neighboring homes.

Our goals for the rebuild include the following:

1. **Safety and Stability** - We plan to build a home that is not only structurally sound, but also properly supported on the lot. We want to ensure the home is built with fire safety in mind, and will use fire-safe building materials to reduce any risk. In addition, we will install a proper fire truck turnaround at the end of our driveway, which will contribute to the overall safety of the entire neighborhood. Given our home's location at the end of the private road, almost every delivery or moving truck that comes up our road will need to use the turnaround we install, thereby serving our entire community on Highland Ave and Highland Terrace. Having a well-sized and safe turnaround will add to the benefit of all the residents. Our land use plan ensures appropriate defensible space around the house, leveraging the pool placement on the edge of the slope as a natural and critical fire break.
2. **Energy Efficiency** - We are utilizing a fully electric system for heating, cooling and cooking appliances in the home. We will also be installing solar panels and separate power cells in case of any power outages. The overall energy efficiency of the home will be significantly improved over the current home as we currently have doors and windows that do not fully close!
3. **Water Management** - A key component of the structural decay of the existing house is lack of proper water management. We will fix that by putting proper drainage in place, installing an appropriate and compliant septic system, water cisterns and a fire hydrant. Our goal is to ensure the land is maintained properly to mitigate any ill-effects of water drainage, and provide supplemental water for any fire safety needs.
4. **Space** - We will be increasing the size of our home from ~3500 to ~4200 square feet, by adding a 4th bedroom, an office space and room for our rising teenagers to entertain their friends. We envision our home being the destination for our friends and family to gather over the years, and want to ensure there is space for all to be comfortable.
5. **Design and Function** - The new home layout takes advantage of the vistas on the lot, with views to the ridge and canyon on the south and west sides of the property. We are also designing the function of the interior of the home to accommodate separate living and entertaining spaces. Currently, the layout of our home has the front door several hundred feet from the driveway, and the garage at the complete opposite end of the house from the kitchen. To enter the home from the garage today, one has to pass

through the master bedroom closet and master bedroom! Our new home will have a much more functional and rational layout to accommodate a growing family of 4.

We are eager to move forward with our plans due to the incredible instability and safety issues the current home affords. We realized after the structural engineer's assessment that it has become critical to rebuild as soon as we can, to ensure a safe home not only for our family, but also for the hillside area. The recent events with local fires has also impressed upon us the need to ensure proper fire safety measures are available for the neighborhood with a fire truck turnaround, and fire safe building materials on the homes in the area. We feel a responsibility to the hillside neighborhood to be proactive land stewards, and a major component of that is ensuring safely built and structured homes. We have spent a great deal of time ensuring the home is designed well for the topography and fits well into the landscape, while also maintaining privacy for the neighbors and increasing the safety of the lot and home.

Thank you for your expedient consideration of our application and we look forward to hearing back shortly.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brandy and Jordan Sweetnam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brandy" being more prominent and followed by "and Jordan Sweetnam" in a similar style.

Brandy and Jordan Sweetnam